'Pipsqueak' Reporters Said to Anger Burger

By James A. Kidey 5/30/71
United Press International

In the eyes of Chief Justice Warren Burger, some reporters covering the supreme court are "young pipsqueaks" who are too anxious to divide the justices into "liberals" and "conservatives."

According to acquaintances, Burger thinks Supreme Court reporting was more straightforward in the 1930s and 1940s, prior to the controversial 16-year period when Earl Warren was chief justice.

Friends report Burger told them recently he was "disturbed about the number of young pipsqueak reporters whose knowledge of history begins with Vietnam and ends with Cambodia."

[A court spokesman said the chief justice had no comment on the report.]

Only two of the dozen or so full-time Supreme Court reporters are under 30, with most of them in their late 30s or older. Five reporters have law degrees, and several others have had some formal legal training.

The acquaintances said they did not pursue Burger's "pipsqueak" remark in the conversation, and he did not expand on it. But Burger went on to complain that Supreme Court reporters tend to be too critical, especially when they divide the court along liberal and conservative lines of judicial philosophy.

He apparently believes suhh divisions are outdated with the presence of four new justices, including Burger, since Warren's retirement in 1969.

Burger has shown distrust of the media before, especially television. Last winter he refused to permit filmingof his speech to a meeting of the American Bar Association in Chicago. He defended his decision on grounds his remarks might be edited out of context and the bright television lights hurt his eyes.

Burger relented somewhat and allowed filming of excerpts of his speech before delivering it to the ABA.

In 1970, following a similar ABA address, Burger complained about "disrespectful and outrageous" conduct by a CBS televiiosn crew.

"Who do they think they are?" he wrote CBS President Frank Stanton. "They have no otpion on my face or voice. Their conduct was disrespectful and outrageous. The media better find they have to have people who can take care of basic manners."